

Churchman Here Tells How He Escaped Russian Reds

THOSE who remember the story of how the Marquis de Lantana, of the Vandee, eluded the armies of Danton and Robespierre will be able to appreciate the story of how the Metropolitan Platon, one of the highest dignitaries in the Russian Church and a conspicuous representative of the old régime in Russia, escaped from the hands of the Bolsheviks in Odessa. Platon, as he is known in the Russian Church, is now in New York, after many weeks of travel that took him from Odessa, his diocese, to Constantinople, thence back to Novorisk, where he boarded a ship for America. He was aided in his escape by the French and English military and naval authorities in the south of Russia. He arrived in New York on the steamship Vladimir, of the Russian Volunteer Fleet, several days ago. Just as the French Convention outlawed the Marquis de Lantana and placed a price upon his head, so did the Bolsheviks proclaim Platon outside the pale of law and offer a reward for his capture dead or alive. When the Bolsheviks swept down upon Odessa through the Ukraine last March they caused large proclamations to be published and placed upon the walls of the towns and villages along the route: "The revolution has proclaimed the death of Platon. All loyal sons of the revolution will abide by this decision and act accordingly." The Bolshevik commanders vowed that the moment they reached Odessa they would execute Platon. Platon told the story of his persecution and escape at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Ninety-seventh Street and Madison Avenue.

see, fortunately, I possess the power of taming wild animals. I utilized it to good advantage in the days of the old régime, when I lived in South Russia, and singlehandedly halted mobs of thousands of hoodlums and Black Hundreds in Kishineff, Kieff, Chotin and other cities, bent upon killing and plundering the Jewish population."

Platon then told of how he stopped a huge mob of 20,000 Black Hundreds in Kieff by appearing in his regalia in the principal public square and admonishing them to desist from murder and pillage. In a few moments, he said, the mob, bent on killing and destruction, fell upon its knees, prayed with him and dispersed.

Many Priests Murdered

"But if the Bolsheviks had succeeded in killing me," he continued, "they would have added only another victim to that already long martyrologue of the Russian Church under the Bolshevik régime. I would not have been the only priest they murdered. They have murdered hundreds of my brothers of the church and thousands of peasants who dared to raise their voices in behalf of the church. One of my objects in coming to America is to reduce this martyrologue of the Russian Church into writing."

"We were living in comparative peace and calm in Odessa," said Platon, "until the Bolsheviks swept down into the Ukraine. Then began an orgy of pillage, destruction and murder. I find no quarrel with the principle that the worker should get the fruits of his toil. But there are other people in this world besides people in overalls and peasant costumes. Against all these the Bolsheviks have proclaimed a holy war. Choke, kill every bourgeois! That is their slogan, and I must say they are consistent. They are carrying out the dictum with fendish energy. As a matter of fact we all seem to have lost the capacity to think and feel in Russia. A tempest, a terrible tempest has struck the sea of our Russian humanity and the waves are smashing upon each other with immeasurable fury. We seem to have lost the capacity to think and understand each other. God grant that the tempest may soon be over and that peace and order may return to our land."

Continuing his story, Platon said:

"The French commander in Odessa, General d'Anselme, promised me that Odessa would never be surrendered into the hands of the Bolsheviks. He had



The Metropolitan Platon of the Russian Church

plenty of Russian, Greek and French troops at his disposal to keep his promise. However, when Nikolai

Cherson and other cities fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks, I visited the general and asked him what he meant

by apparently deliberately surrendering these cities to the Bolsheviks. He explained that the surrenders were

necessary for strategic reasons. In a very few days, however, he sent his adjutant to me and informed me that I

would have to leave the city—for two or three weeks, he said. The adjutant informed me, also, that the city would be temporarily surrendered to the Bolsheviks. I protested against this, as well as against the plan to have me leave the city. I was virtually kidnapped, however, by French officers, rushed upon a ship and taken to Constantinople. I remained in Constantinople several days and then prevailed upon the commander of an English cruiser to take me to Novorisk. I arrived in Novorisk in the dead of night, disguised as a peasant and went ashore in a small boat. There I bordered the Vladimir and came to America."

Platon expressed the opinion that the days of the Bolshevik régime are numbered. He cited the clearing of the Bolsheviks from the Donetz coal basin, told in last week's dispatches, and said that the young Russian generals waging war against the Bolsheviks were animated with but one desire: to save Russia from the chaos and anarchy now enveloping her. He denied that their aim is to restore the old régime.

"The old régime is just as impossible in Russia as is the continuation of the régime of the Bolsheviks," he declared. "Both of them resemble each other in their failures, cruelties and disregard of the interests of the people." He said that as soon as Kolchak, Dutoff and Denikin reach Moscow they will call a constituent assembly and let this assembly decide the future political structure of the country.

Asked whether Russia will remain a republic or will restore the monarchy, Platon said:

"We are not thinking of that just yet. We are now concerned with ridding ourselves of the Bolshevik nightmare. When that is done it will be time enough to think whether or not we shall remain a republic or restore the monarchy. The constituent assembly will have the final word on that. It is highly probable, however, that the assembly will favor a federated republic of Russian states on the American plan."

President Wilson, Platon said, lost nearly the whole of his prestige in Russia because of the Prinkipo proposal. "When Russia heard of the proposal," he said, "the whole country laughed. Everybody laughed, without distinction of political opinion. One might as well have commanded the stars to stop shining as to command the civil war in Russia to stop. We are all mad in Russia and our madness must run its course, until sanity returns to us once more. Bolshevism is a disease, a terrible disease. I believe, however, that the process of convalescence has already begun and the time is not far distant when the patient will be well again. I have great faith in Russia despite her present tragedy, and I believe that in ten or fifteen years she will be the greatest and most powerful country in Europe, ready to face her enemies, wherever they may be."

Platon expressed chagrin at America's failure to support the anti-Bolshevik forces in a military way. He urged that instead of the withdrawal of the American forces in Russia they be increased.

Platon was particularly pessimistic on the Jewish question in Russia. He prophesied that the Jewish population will suffer greatly for the sins of the Jewish leaders among the Bolsheviks, and particularly for the behavior of Trotsky.

"Trotsky," he said, "is looked upon as a real power behind the Bolshevik régime. There was a time when Lenin represented that power, but Lenin is now spending his days brooding over the tragedy his madness has produced, while Leiba Bronstein-Trotsky is parading about Russia in military uniform, playing the rôle of commander in chief and ordering unspeakable outrages. I must give him credit, however. He is a pretty slick and courageous fellow. He knows his business. As far as the innocent Jewish population is concerned, I fear greatly that an infuriated and outraged population will make no distinction between the sinners and the innocent. That is the great crime of Bolshevism. By perpetrating inexcusable and unspeakable outrages it has unloosed a tempest of bestiality and brutality in the broad, ignorant masses of the country. It will be a heroic task for us, the intelligent and educated portion of the population, to hold these instincts in check. We hope we may succeed."

Cure for Bolshevism

Platon expressed great fear at the danger of Bolshevism gaining a foothold in America.

"Since my arrival here," he said, "I have been told there is a strong Bolshevik undercurrent at work in your country, too. Don't let the hydra raise its head. I am informed that you have quite a considerable part of your population rooting for Bolshevism. Let these people go to Russia and see for themselves. I believe they will be cured quickly enough."

Battlefields, With Wounds Healing, Await Tourists

By Chester W. Shafer

Private, Ambulance 339, Sanitary Train 310, A. E. F.

FROM Château Thierry to the Vesle isn't quite the same journey this year that it was in 1918. As a matter of fact, the only features that remain unchanged are the intervening kilometres.

Last year it took the O. D.-colored and mouse-scented American soldiers from July to October to make the trip, and they negotiated the distance in the face of the fiercest opposition the Germans could muster. Now it requires only a day to do the trip in a Ford, and if the traveller is lucky he can make Soissons in time to catch a glass of vin rouge and the evening accommodation back to Paris.

At the same time the degree of opposition depends entirely on the bulk of the souvenirs collected. Less than a year ago the marines and the doughboys squashed the Hun designs on Paris and reduced the Marne salient to the proper ownership. Only about eight months have elapsed since that most famous sector of the war was absorbed. And in that short time it has been changed from the greatest battleground of history to the most prized sightseeing theatre in Europe. It took guts to go to the Vesle in 1918. Now all that is required is a pass from general headquarters, or no pass at all, and transportation.

The heroes of Château Thierry, the men who did those willing drives last summer, are either back in the States or they are interred where they fell. To-day the junket is being made by soldiers and gobs on leave, AWOLs, by Y. M. C. A. and K. of C. secretaries, by officers and dignitaries from all nations of the globe, and by civilians who are exceptionally well to do. They stare

their ways over the shattered routes in trucks, limousines, ambulances, motorcycles or "au pied." Thousands have already passed. They climb the slopes of Belleau Wood in delightful parties. They laugh and skip and Ah! over the ground that, less than a year ago, was won by the inch. They hurry through Vaux and Fère-en-Tardenois; they gaze at the ruined piles that once were Fismes; they bare their heads at the countless wayside cemeteries and graves; they marvel and they wonder how it was done, and they make their collection of souvenirs and go on. When they have finished, they tell of their wonderful trip. Which it is now. And ever will be.

June a Year Ago

Both the Boche and the Allied artillery battered Château Thierry. The Germans tossed in their monster GI cans (high explosive shells) and followed them down the hill into the northern part of the city, in squad formation, singing the victory yodels for God and the King and the Fatherland. That was in June last year. Then the French and the Americans countered in the shelling. The stone houses crumbled; the buildings were blasted; the bridges were destroyed. And the shelling was continued until along in July when the Jerries attempted to cross the Marne. A machine gun battalion of the third division not only crimped the plan, but furnished much groundwork for many a cross bearing the words "Hier Ruht." But in spite of all this action many places of the city escaped with slight damage.

Chief among these was the "gare"—the railroad station. This was scarcely touched and the sign of the city, spelled with white letters on a blue enamelled background, remains as it was on the wall near the main doorway leading to the trains. Last

The Traveller Discovers a Battleground Picture Very Different Than That Existing During the Fiery Days of 1918

year this sign attracted no attention. This year it is the first object to catch the eye of the tourist. Before it, to-day, every one poses for a snapshot. Back to the sign, hat off, be sure that the letters are showing, smiling, that famous name is entered on the films of every camera that enters the city. On some particularly good days the lineup for place stretches out to the tracks. Should the French government ever take advantage of this preëminent feature of Château Thierry and levy a tax of one franc the pose on the sightseers the huge war debt of the nation would vanish as quickly as it was achieved. After a time this craze will result in a new species of bore—he who proudly points and declares "That's me at Chateau Thierry."

Ready for Tourists

Aside from the sign on the depot Château Thierry of to-day offers little. It has its ruins and those who are working to clear up the debris and put the city back on its pre-war basis. The Marne rushes along under wooden bridges thrown over by American engineers. The shopkeepers have hauled out the remaining shelves and are offering brass matchbox holders with the "Gott Mit Uns" circle, lace handkerchiefs with the embroidered letters "Souvenir de France" or "For My Sweetheart" and every imaginable souvenir of the war. Near the depot Paul Lefevre has repainted his sign of trade, "Vins et Liqueurs," in the hope of patronage, and one enterprising hotelkeeper has hung out a notice, "Steam Heated Rooms," one of which was liberally

ventilated by a shell and is still open to repair. There are a few polli guards about and the villagers are fixing up as best they can. The streets have all been repaired. In the yard of one ruined home stands a rusty American machine gun. In the piles of debris are clips of rifle cartridges. Hundreds of the homes are but masses of stone and mortar. Some shells merely plumped through, leaving behind a jagged hole. But the residents are at work on reconstruction. They have looked into the prospect of the number of visitors in the future. In a short time the historic place will be ready for all those who go there, and good accommodations may be had at the customary prices that the French think the Americans should pay. And there will be sufficient ruins left untouched to satisfy the craving of the tourists for many years to come.

Prisoners at Work

On the way to Vaux, through the lines of splintered trees, there are German prisoners. They are repairing some of the damage they inflicted during the war. And this year they are not in squad formation. Neither do they yodel the songs for God, the King and the Fatherland. They work, but not assiduously. They move slowly and deliberately. A gang of fifty of these "prisonniers de guerre" accomplish about as much in a day as a reheaded American youth would do in three-quarters of an hour. Their chief idea is to get the day over with. The sooner the better.

Two French soldiers were guarding a gang up the hill out of Château Thierry. The polli were four-raggers and carried rifles, with bayonets fixed. All but one of the Germans were loading a wagon with gravel. The one was peeling the potatoes for the noon meal. When a party of American soldiers and gobs approached, the prisoners immediately dropped their work. And, despite the feeble protests of the guards, they began offering souvenir rings for sale. Each one had several, made in spare hours—metal rings, with black crosses imbedded in the face. The Americans paused and dickered, and several sales were effected, the price ranging from five to fifteen francs. German prisoners such as these make very good money selling these rings. And when they go back across the Rhine and get a few hundred marks for every franc they won't be long growing influential.

Individual graves—French, German and American—are scattered along the roadsides into Le Thiolet, just as they are along every road in the devastated regions of France. Most of them are marked by rude crosses. Also there are cemeteries. One, off to the left of the road near a strawstack, was surrounded by a fence made from birch poles which were ghastly white in the sunlight. The men had been buried in two trenches, each of which had a common mound. The crosses were arranged at the head, in an orderly row. Each bore the American decoration, a tin circle of red, white and blue. And on the small tin plates the name, identification number and company were engraved. A cemetery such as this was near the road at Belleau Wood. And in the field stretching over to the wood there were countless shell holes, filled, each one of which was numbered on a board driven into the ground.

The Violets Grow

Belleau Wood, with its shattered trees and rocks, its dugouts and its

seeming impregnability, offers a chance for violets to grow now. It is back 100 yards or so up a slope from the road and its recesses are difficult to gain. No one struggles up to the higher rocks without wondering how the feat was ever accomplished under fire. Under a tree which had been felled by a shell was a shoe, an American hob, partially filled with water. It was laced to the last eyelet and the laces were securely knotted. A slit down each side showed where it had been cut off with a knife. And there was a bullet hole just where the ankle must have been. It told just one of the stories of the fighting and the suffering in the wood. Not far from it a board had been stuck in the ground. On it were the words, printed in pencil, "Two German Soldiers." That told another story. Which made it fifty-fifty with the shoe.

Like Central Park

Belleau Wood was geographically similar to Central Park, New York, before the summer of 1918. Since that time it was thoroughly shredded. Over the boulders and through the thick underbrush the marines attacked on July 6, 1918. Sustaining heavy losses they won the wood. And the French government, in honor of the achievement, has renamed it "Le Bois de la Brigade des Marines."

Beyond Belleau Wood there are fields. One peasant has a crop of wheat sprouting on a ten-acre plot this year. He has cleared away the barbed wire entanglements, filled the trenches and shell holes, picked up the discarded rifles and grenade butts, piled up the studs and the shell casings and has gone to work where he left off about five years

ago. Farming in the shelled regions is not what it used to be.

Boursches comes after Belleau Wood in the tourist's itinerary. Ruined also, like the others. But the village blacksmith has returned. He has patched up his shop and has his forge running. Every now and then he shoes a horse or repairs the damage to some farm implement. At an intersection of roads near the Croix Rouge farm there are American and Italian cemeteries. Both are surrounded by fences. On the Italian graves are helmets and rifles and other bits of war paraphernalia. The American graves have the conventional crosses. And tacked to the post at the gate leading into the American cemetery is this sign:

G. O. 30, Bulletin 41, G. H. Q. The Placing of Anything on Graves Sentimentally or Otherwise Causing Inequality By Organizations or Individuals Is Forbidden. Grave Registration Service.

Fismes, with its romantic name, is just across the Vesle. The road leading down from the heights has been repaired and another American bridge spans the little stream. The Americans never crossed the Vesle. The fight stabilized there until the armistice was signed. But the Germans in Fismes did not sleep well nights. The American artillery reduced most of the homes. To-day there is a tin sign advertising automobile tires which got in the way of fully 300 American bullets. It is the worst puncture in France.

From Fismes on to Soissons the demolition was so complete that very little escaped. Shell holes and ruins are everywhere. And by this time, on the 1919 junket, devastation has grown so common that it passes unnoticed. Travellers are "fed up" when this stage of the journey is reached, and there are few exclamations.

Chinese colonials are working along the roads on the various reconstruction projects. Gangs of Senegalese and Moroccans are building railways and bridges. They work slowly and lackadaisically. The streets of Soissons have been cleaned up. The debris has been pushed back from the pavements.

Many of the business houses are operating again, selling cheeses, souvenir postcards and souvenirs. The station, which was damaged by many air raids, is being fixed up, and a French sentry examines those who pass.

Several cafés near the depot have been opened, all of which bear traces of the bombardments. On the door of each the French commandant, Gabarrot, has carefully tacked a written notice forbidding the sale of any liquor with an alcoholic base to the colonial laborers, the Chinese and the Annamites. Because, as the madame explained it, the colonials do not carry their liquor well.

The operations from Château Thierry to the Vesle and on to Soissons were the first to be started by the American Expeditionary Forces. They took the sting from the German advance and made it possible to use many transports to good advantage this year. The main routes through this region were not used by the soldiers last year. They went "cross-country." This year the roads have come back into their own and the sightseers go over the top in Fords and other vehicles. As they go over they pick up the shell casings, the discarded packs, the cartridge clips and every available souvenir that was left behind by the negro labor battalions that swept over after the armistice. But few real good souvenirs now remain, although Belleau Wood will offer splinters of trees and rock for countless years to come.

Up to April, this year, no sightseeing, souvenir-hunting "tripper" had stopped to take on the body of a supply wagon that was tossed over into a field near Lucy-le-Bocage by a German shell. It bears the signature of the 6th Marines. But, even though it has been passed up thus far, it will not remain long. Some gobs on a three-day permission out of a base port will lead it up, weather permitting, and have it transferred to his ship for passage home. And in the coming days he will use it advantageously as a premise in that never to be settled argument about the respective supremacy of the marines and the doughboys at Château Thierry.